

The (prison) eagle has landed in Carson City

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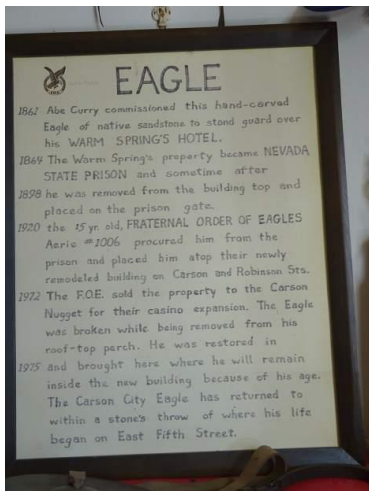
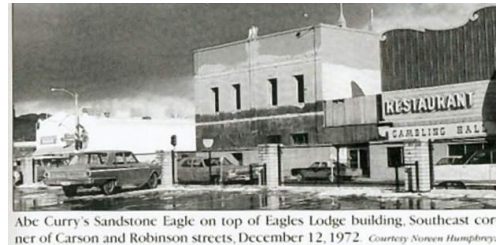
After 96 years in private hands, the sandstone sculpture of an eagle that once graced the entrance of the old Nevada State Prison is back at the historic prison.

One might say the eagle has landed.

The eagle was originally commissioned by Carson City founder Abe Curry in 1861 as a decoration for his Warm Springs Hotel. The hotel was converted to the state prison in 1862 and the one-ton sculpture ended up atop the prison gate. It remained there until 1920 when the Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie No. 1006 acquired it and put it atop their building at Carson and Robinson Streets.

Glen Whorton, who heads the prison preservation society said the eagle is "the last identifiable piece of the original structure we're aware of."

"We're very confident in its authenticity," he said. "The thing that's remarkable about it too is the detail that still exists despite the fact it sat outside for decades."



He said the plan is to make the eagle the centerpiece of the prison's planned historic exhibits.

The Eagles organization moved the bird to its new property on Fifth Street in 1972 after it sold the downtown building to the Carson Nugget. The statue was damaged in that move but restored in 1975 and since then has been inside, out of the weather.

Recently, the Eagles lodge chapter was disbanded.

Whorton said fortunately the group recognized the historic significance of the stone bird and offered it to the NSP Preservation Society. He said with the assistance of the state Railroad Museum's supervisor Chris DeWitt and his crews, they

were able to move the bird outside where staff from Warm Springs Correctional Center moved it to the prison dayroom.

He said Bob Nylen of the state museum examined the sculpture and ruled it a great piece of Nevada history.

Whorton said work continues to convert the now-closed Nevada State Prison into a historic center for the public. As part of that effort, he said the society is raising money to finance a change of use permit that will allow public access to the prison, including addressing health, safety and ADA access issues.

He said they have already raised some money toward that process and are seeking grant funding.

"I stress that the importance of the prison is not just as a prison," Whorton said. "It's important to the political history of this state."

The original Warm Springs Hotel was, in fact, where the state's territorial legislature met.

He said the preservation society is also looking for historic artifacts connected to the history of NSP.

He said anyone wishing to donate either funding or artifacts from the prison can contact the society at 775-297-0240 or nevadastateprison.org.